

One

Pratt Media sought out my talent as a writer for the last few months. Ryan Pratt, Bryce's longest known associate, and best friend promised if anything ever happened to him, I would be secure. He held his promise to Bryce through the numerous calls and texts I have left un-replied. I was incapable of facing Ryan. My schedule was consistent work, home, work, bed, and repeat. My life was beginning to cycle in a circle, and my apartment was beginning to feel like the epicenter for self-pity.

Ryan become more persistent as weeks passed. He would call and email more frequently hoping he would receive a reply. Just when I finally thought he got the hint he showed up to my apartment. I was sitting on my couch in Bryce's favorite joggers and a too worn t-shirt with stains and holes with my face buried in my laptop when the doorbell rang. I jump up and yell. "Who is it?"

"Vivian, Ryan, Ryan Pratt, I've been trying to reach you.", he replies through the door.

"Just a minute," I say while rushing towards the door adjusting the hair tie holding my messy ponytail. I look down at the hot mess I had become, and I was not prepared for visitors. I approach the door and reach for the knob then, it hits me like a ton of bricks there was no denying, I have been avoiding him. I consider telling him to go away, but I get a feeling he's on a mission, and not leaving until we talk.

I opened the door smiling politely. He flashes me his million-dollar boyish grin, "Hey Vivian, how ya been?"

"Ryan, sorry I haven't called or messaged back. I-" The last time I saw Ryan was at Bryce's funeral. "As well as I can, I suppose.", I lie.

"I'm sorry, Vivian. You meant the world to Bryce. It was his last wish that I make sure you're taken care of." He pleas. I felt bad avoiding him, but I wasn't ready to face the world. I invite him in and plop onto the suede sofa, I let out a long sigh. He examines the carryout containers and empty bottles of water all over the table and counter. I bow my head in shame. Bryce would've never let this place get messy.

Ryan picks up my takeout container of lo mien and places it on the coffee table with the rest of them, then takes a seat on the sofa. "I have a position opening in the company. I think you will fit perfectly." I look at him confused as he continued, "It involves a lot of traveling, but I think it's what you need right now." Ryan was biting his bottom lip nervously, probably hoping I didn't tell him to go eff himself. *"How long?"* I ask. *"How long?"* Ryan questions. *"How long will I have to travel?"*

"Oh, yeah. Eight weeks. You would be on tour with the band," he claims as he pulls a contract out of his black genuine leather briefcase. "The band manager for Letters from Vegas, hired Pratt Media to manage their social media. They need someone to manage their brand and create a media page for people to follow them. Details are outlined in the contract." He pauses searching for a reaction. Instead, I stay silent. "You don't have to say yes now. I'll give you the weekend to read everything over. See if it's something of interest. The money is good. Housing, travel expenses, and food would all be paid for by the company. I think this would be a good fresh start for you, Vivian. Bryce would want you to be happy and go on with life."

It was true, Bryce would've wanted me to move on, but I wasn't ready to let go. The time I spent with him was the most amazing chapter of my life and I wasn't ready to finish it. Bryce was the only person I felt ever understood me and my workaholic ways.

The weekend comes and goes, I read through the contract on Sunday. Basically, I would follow around a band known as Letters from Vegas for eight weeks snapping pictures of the concerts, fan meet and greets, or any positive images. Contract requests were outlined in bold lettering. They seemed to be typical requests. Working with high-profile clients was different. They varied depending on the client's contract. One that I found interesting was: **Do not disturb the band members or staff.** How do you avoid someone that hired you to take pictures of them?

I realized I'd never heard of Letters from Vegas. What type of music do they play? Who are the members? I grab my phone to pull up Tweetster. I type the band name in the search bar. Three matches pop up. None of them look official so I click on Pictogram. Locating the official band page, I watch a few short clips of concert footage. The music was catchy, so I locate them on MyTube. While I researched them, I listen to their songs. Vegas State of Mind was my favorite. The song was about growing up in

Vegas as a kid. An hour later I was dancing around the apartment. Ryan was right. I am surrounded by constant reminder of the love I lost. I need to move on.

I wait until mid-afternoon Monday to call Ryan. His personal secretary picks up. She sounds young and energetic. "Thank you for calling Pratt Media. Ryan Pratt's office. How may I help you?"

"May I speak with Mr. Pratt please." Keeping my voice at a pitch lower than hers. "He's in a meeting right now. May I take a message?" She politely asks. "He's been expecting a call from me. Vivian Byrd."

"Oh, yes Vivian. Let me see if can track him down. Can you hold please?" She places the call on hold. Elevator music filled the line while I waited. Two sleepy songs later the secretary picks back up, "Vivian, I'm going to transfer you to his office. Have a wonderful day and thank you for calling Pratt Media." You can hear her pressing the buttons to transfer before the phone begins ringing. "Hey Vi! I wasn't sure if you were going to call me back or if I was going to have to file a missing persons report." Ryan chuckled. "I thought about packing my bags and moving to Australia, but I figured you would just find me." I joke. "On a serious note, I looked over the job offer this weekend." I inform him. "What are your thoughts Vi? Is it something you are interested in?"

I look around the apartment, "Yes. I think you're right. I need to try to move on and staying here all day is not helping me."

"I agree but I don't want to push you if you're not ready I just figured this would give you the opportunity to travel like you've always wanted." I hated that Ryan was right. He was right the other night, and he is right now. "I believe you're right. I need to move on." I could hear him sigh. "Vi, you know I don't mean it as a bad thing. You're a great writer and I need you; you need this. Just think of it as a new beginning." I suppose that is what this opportunity is, a new beginning. We go over the details and finish up. A week from today I would be saying goodbye to my old life and hello to my new.

It had been a while since I last went shopping. I figured since I was going to be on the road a lot, I probably needed some new clothes. Depression can sometimes get the best of you. For days I laid in bed all day in Bryce's shirt crying myself to sleep. Why did he have to leave me? Bryce was the kindest soul I had ever seen. Gone in the blink of an eye. I spent months trying to figure out why the happiest time of my life was taken from me. Am I that bad of a person I didn't deserve happiness?

After trying on several items, I grab my findings heading to the register. The girl at the register looked to be in her early 20s. She was wearing a bright purple strapless sun dress that came just below her knee. She perks up smiling, "Traveling?" I smile "Yeah sort of. It's for a job." She raises her eyebrows

impressed. "Where do I sign up?" I feel my mood lighten up. This is going to be exactly what I need. To learn to live again.

The week went by rather quickly. I decided since I was beginning a new life, I needed a new look. My parents were strict growing up. I wasn't allowed to cut or dye my hair. I never understood why. I just know I was the only kid in high school who wasn't allowed to express my individuality. I decided now was the time to change that. I spent twenty minutes with Shayla, the beautician, at the salon deciding what style to go with. It was hard to picture myself with anything other than my long brown curls. I decided on a messy lob. This would be a low maintenance hairstyle since I already have the curls. I left the coloring choice up to Shayla. I didn't recognize myself when she spun me around to face the mirror. The messy lob framed my face perfectly. My once chocolate brown curls were now ombré into a light blond at the tips. For the first time since Bryce's death, I felt hope about the direction my life was headed.

Before I knew it, I woke to the sound of my alarm. I was meeting the bands manager prior to climbing aboard my home on wheels for the next eight weeks. The excitement set in last night. I laid out my clothes, packed my bags, and chose to head to bed early. I wanted to be well rested for my first day. The first day of a new job is always the most exhausting. I grab my bags as I head to the door. I turn to face the living room. The memories wash over me. This would be the last time I sleep in the bed we shared for a while. I close my eyes imagining Bryce as always, standing before me cheering me on, "You got this. You're gonna do great. I'll be here waiting on you when you get back. I love you Vi. Always and forever."

LML